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SAN DIEGO
ROUBADOOR
 Alternative country, Americana, roots,
 folk, gospel, and bluegrass music news



July 2003

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what's inside

Welcome Mat.....3

Mission Statement
 Contributors
 Out and About

Full Circle.....4

Fanny, Nook, & Cranny
 Lou Curtiss

Front Porch.....6

Anya Marina
 That Mad Ahab
 Twiggs
 Steve Denyes

Parlor Showcase.....8

Steve Poltz

Ramblin'10

Bluegrass Corner
 Radio Daze
 José Sinatra
 Paul Abbott

Of Note.....12

Peter Hall
 Darlin' and Rose
 Shadowdogs
 Will Edwards
 Rookie Card

'Round About13

RantHouse
 July Music Calendar

The Local Seen.....15

Photo Page





Phil Harmonic Sez:

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—George Bernard Shaw

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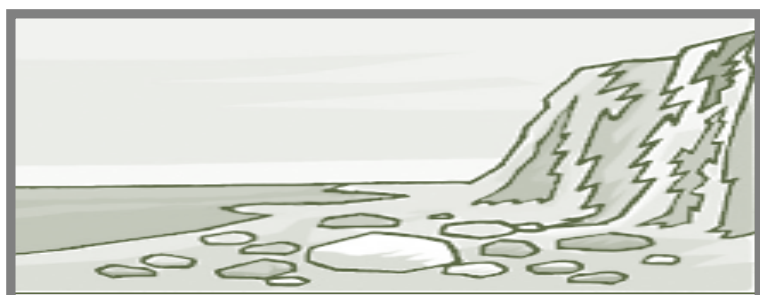
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WHO SAID THERE'S NOTHING TO DO IN THIS TOWN?

by Phil Harmonic

In actuality, there is almost too much to do. This city has more entertainment options than there are Starbucks outlets in the county. Well, maybe not. But still, the choices are plentiful. I'd like to share what I did in a less than 10-day period from May 29 to June 7.

Double-checking our itinerary for the week, my beautiful wife, **Tipsi Holiday** and I were off to Balboa Park on Thursday evening to see **Brave Combo** at the **Fern Street Circus'** outdoor stage in Balboa Park. What an incredible treat, as anyone who was there would know, to listen and dance to music played by the modern kings of polka and just about everything else. Glancing over the crowd, I spotted local San Diego musician **David Page**



Brave Combo at Fern Street Circus

and friend and associate **Marco Anguiano** of the Adams Ave. Business Association. With old friends **Rick Sexton** and **Ruben Seja** doing the sound, who else should show up but two of San Diego's music experts, **George Varga** of the *S.D. Union-Tribune* and **Rob Hagey** of Street Scene. It was a good time for all who attended.

The weekend brought me back to my responsibility of working for a living, so I continued to wrap up my delivery of Ken Cinema film schedules and our own *S.D. Troubadour* to various locations throughout the county. I happened to stop by the **Artist's Colony** in Encinitas (where **Danny Salzhandler** has been doing a great job booking the music) at the exact same time **Cindy Lee Berryhill** and **Randy Hoffman** began their evening performance. Berryhill's quirky songs are such a delight and so wonderfully embellished by Hoffman on percussion, tympani, and everything but the kitchen sink. Unfortunately I could only stay for five or six songs. It was hard to pull myself away from watching master Hoffman, who has drummed every style (blues, jazz, rock 'n' roll) in various bands and played every kind of percussion instrument, including **Harry Partch's** original instruments. His talent for innovation is truly genius and I am surprised that his name doesn't appear more often on locally produced CDs.

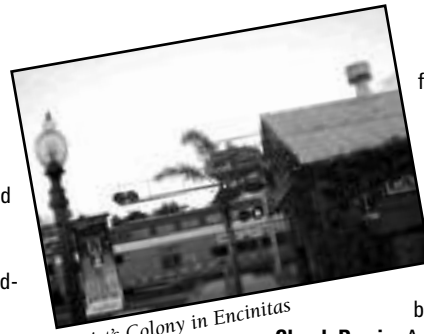
On Sunday the *Troubadour* staff were treated to a performance of **Fire on the Mountain** at the **San Diego Repertory Theater**. I was moved, impressed, and pleased that San Diego has such quality theater as the Rep, Lamb's Players, the Old Globe, and the La Jolla Playhouse.



The Ould Sod

Wednesday night found me at the **Ould Sod** where the **Hatchet Brothers** were playing. I talked with **C.J. Hutchens** and fellow staffer **Millie Moreno** with whom I held a short meeting outside, around the corner, in the parking lot. Gotta match?

Tuesday night is special at **Blind Melon's** in Pacific Beach where **José Sinatra** hosts their **Karaoke Night**. Ladies, here's your opportunity to spend three and a half hours and become a close personal friend of the Hose himself. He does this as a benefit for a group in Japan that call themselves the Save All Karaoke Effort or SAKE as they are known here in the U.S. You will also find another local writer with a regular weekly column behind the bar: **Edwin Decker** from *City Beat*.



Artist's Colony in Encinitas

One of my favorite venues is **Dizzy's**. Located downtown, right next to the new ball park, **Dizzy's** is run by another veteran musician and booking agent,

Chuck Perrin. A real asset to the San Diego music scene, Perrin, who is well-connected, brings top talent and diverse musical styles to **Dizzy's**, one being **Sven-Erik Seaholm** whose CD release party on June 5, in a word, **ROCKED**. **Chuck Schiele** and the **Mysterious Ways** and **Mr. Soul, Dave Howard**, opened. All three are great songwriters as well as top performers and arrangers. Good friend **Jon Edwards** (Java Joe's, Croce's) handled the sound. Even the audience included a semi-*Who's Who* from the local music scene: I shared laughs with **Buddy Blue** and chatted with **Dan Connor, Sylvester Bowen** of Freedom Guitar, saxophonist **Chris Klich, Carol Ames**, and the list goes on. It was a special night, concluding in North Park shooting pool at the **Second Wind**. Won some, lost some.



Dizzy's

Friday brought me to **Lestat's Coffee House**. Headliner **Carlos Olmeda** stimulated the audience, which included his father and sister, with his unique songwriting style and interpretation. With his comfortable stage presence, he is indeed a crowd pleaser. Former Java Joe waitress, **Meghan LeRoque** opened the evening (my thanks to her manager, **James Adams** for letting me know). Although Meghan and I had spoken many times at Java Joe's, I had never heard her play. I was, to use an old expression, *blown away*. Her opener was a powerful song with a theatrical delivery that would have made **Nick Cave** proud. She can create a mood with just two chords and is able to emulate a distinctly different sound in each song. A gutsy sound with a hint of **Alanis Morissette** and **Jason Mraz**, she's a risk taker on the move, so watch for her name.



Lestat's Coffee House



The Casbah

Later that evening, I ended up at the **Casbah** where San Diego favorite **Steve Poltz** and the **Rugburns** played to a sold-out house, which included **A.J. Croce, Java Joe, Dave Easton, and Adam Gimbel**. My favorite thing to do there, if the Galaga machine is occupied, is to hang outside and watch who comes and goes. I love this bar. Kudos to **Tim** and **Bob**. Thanks, guys. Oh, by the way, could you possibly enroll the doorman (not Andrew) who has some big attitude on me, in a class like Social Skills 101 or Beginning Diplomacy? I told him he was giving me a little too much attention. Even to condescending doormen who lack diplomacy, I'm always compelled to say, "Thanks for concerning yourself with me."



San Diego Historical Society entrance

On Saturday afternoon, Tipsi and I went to Balboa Park and the **San Diego Historical Society**, where Tipsi volunteers, to see and hear a special slide presentation by **Welton Jones** and **Greg Williams**, curator of the photograph collection, on this city's movie theaters from the early 1900s to the present. A real treat for San Diego history buffs. We were on the edge of our seats!

The day couldn't have ended better. The **11th Annual City Heights International Village Celebration** offered great music and food (thanks to **Alma** at **Hot Monkey Love Café** for reminding me about it). **Victor Payan**, experienced talent booker for the **Adams Ave. Street Fair**, was the event coordinator. There was music by **Hot Monkey Love, Los Alacranes, Len Rainey** et al. and lots of wonderful ethnic food, including three different kinds of ribs. By the size of the crowd, I imagine the day was a huge success; I was even able to buy my coffee beans from **Helen** at **Coffees of the World**, since her shop is close by. Truly international in all aspects, especially the music, the festivities brought a warm feeling as I stood in my old neighborhood where I once shed my whiteness and became a human being.



MISSION

To promote, encourage, and provide an alternative voice for the great local music that is generally overlooked by the mass media; namely the genres of folk, country, roots, Americana, gospel, and bluegrass. To entertain, educate, and bring together players, writers, and lovers of these forms; to explore their foundations; and to expand the audience for these types of music.

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We want to hear from you! Send your comments, feedback, and suggestions to: sdtroubadour@yahoo.com or to San Diego Troubadour, P.O. Box 164, La Jolla, CA 92038-0164.





full circle

Fanny, Nook, & Cranny Jumpin' in a Time of Jive

by Lyle Duplessie

On the surface Fanny, Nook, and Cranny appeared to be no more than a premiere local lounge act of the mid to late 70s. It went far deeper than that, however. This little combo specialized in recreating the music of great American artists from the '20s, '30s, and '40s. Though the group covered the contemporary music of the day, its claim to notoriety was how it reached into the past for its soul and inspiration. The works of Fats Waller, Dizzy Gillespie, Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington, the Boswell Sisters, and so many more of the great singers, players, and songwriters sandwiched between the Roaring '20s, the Great Depression, WWII, and the early post-war years, were the mainstay of Fanny, Nook, and Cranny. With their quirky, upbeat, and updated renditions of classic American musical gems, Fanny, Nook, and Cranny provided patrons with not only fine entertainment, but also a musical history lesson.

The core of Fanny, Nook, and Cranny was comprised of guitarist Kent Johnson and flutist Maxxine Sherman. At the time, Johnson was a recently discharged sailor from the aircraft carrier *Kitty Hawk* and one-time lead singer for the navy's Western Pacific Fleet's rock and jazz band. Sherman was a formally trained musician who had studied at Juilliard. Both met while band members of friend Craig Ingraham's band, Freedom Quest, which included a young David Benoit on keyboards and a teenage Bill Richardson on violin. When Freedom Quest broke up in 1973, Johnson and Sherman attended Mesa College as music majors and began their collaboration as the duo Kent and Maxx. They became regulars around town, playing venues as diverse as the upscale Springfield Wagon Works in Kearny Mesa to the seedy Apartment beach bar across from the then-derelict Mission Beach roller coaster.

Duos are limited to what they can do. That's even the case with a very good duo like Kent and Maxx.

In 1976 the duo became a trio with the addition of bass player Barry Rekoon. With this change came the need for a new name. Thus, Fanny, Nook, and Cranny was birthed. The trio's name actually came by way of a rewritten lyric from a crazy Christmas carol penned by Johnson and his old friend José Sinatra a couple of years earlier.

Johnson recalls the period when Fanny, Nook, and Cranny came into being. "In the years just before disco, there were few dance bands around town. Bands were always playing to an audience, so every band that was successful also had to put on a good visual show. A band's music and stage presence had to be unique. They also had to inject a lot of in-between-the-lines humor in their shows. My favorite local bands that blended these aspects real well were O.D. Corral, Montezuma's Revenge, and Thunder Bolt the Wonder Colt."

Fanny, Nook, and Cranny was known for its hysterical, infectious blend of class and irreverence as well as their mastery of the double-entendre. Even though the band had great stage presence and put on memorable shows, it was always the

music that mattered most to its members. They were all drawn to the popular sounds and songs of a nearly forgotten era — ragtime, jazz, jug band, blues, and sultry torch ballads became the substance of the band's repertoire. Many of those songs had been a part of each member's musical baggage, but at this juncture they all became committed students, exploring this music even deeper. You could often find them at Lou Curtiss' old Folk Arts digs on Fifth Avenue, mining for the songs they would be performing a few days later. They soon became experts on these songs, artists, and the times reflected in its representative music.

As for the competition, only one other local band had a similar vision. That band was Stone's Throw. Johnson remembers the two groups sharing a good-natured and supportive rivalry. And even though both bands might cover the same

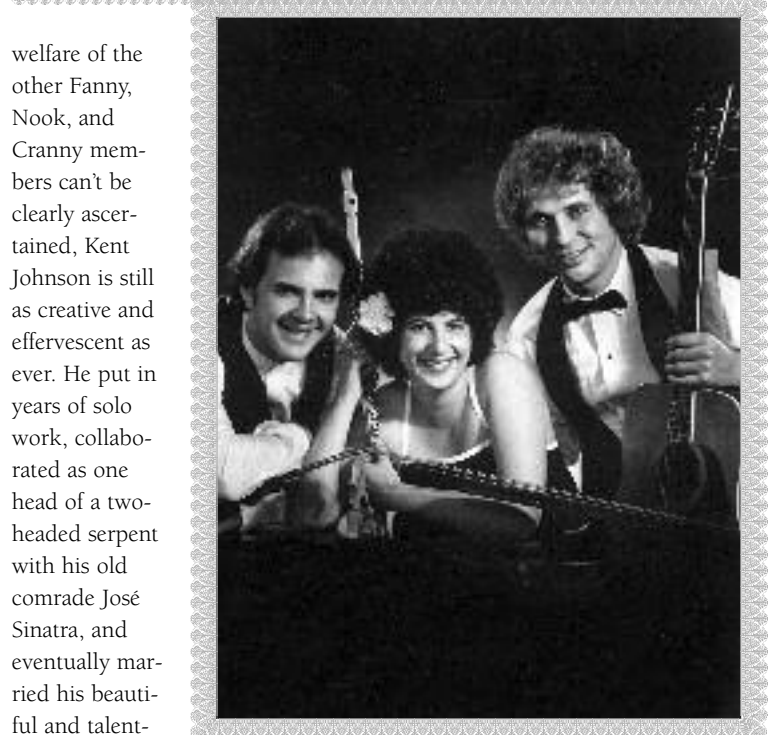
musical territory, their interpretation and delivery could be quite different. Stone's Throw presented very cool and laid-back renditions, whereas Fanny, Nook, and Cranny made the same songs swing and jump.

Between 1976 and 1979 Fanny, Nook, and Cranny became well-known regulars around town. As a mere partial listing, they performed at the Mandolin Wind in Hillcrest, Jose Murphy's in Pacific Beach, Quinn's Pub in Bird Rock, Dick's at the Beach in Solana Beach, Harpoon Henry's on Shelter Island, Jeremiah's Steak House in Rancho Bernardo, the Heart of Europe in La Jolla, and the Triton Restaurant in Cardiff. When they weren't playing taverns and restaurants, they were busy putting on shows at private parties, political fund raisers, and casuals. They even appeared on the *Gong Show* in June, 1977! Out-of-state gigs included a stint at the Holiday Inn in Lubbock, Texas, and a New Year's Eve at the Hotel El Tovar at the Grand Canyon, South Rim.

Things were looking real good for the band when they got a call to play an extended gig at the Inn at the Park in Anaheim. This hotel was part of the Disneyland Hotel Chain, and with a bit of luck they could be regulars with salaried positions, health benefits, a retirement plan, and the whole shebang. With optimism on high, the band moved up to Anaheim. Everything was going fine until one night a hotel chain executive heard the band in one of its frisky moods. He took offense to some of the between-the-lines off-color banter going on between the band and the audience. What went over well in San Diego fell like a lead zeppelin within the confines of a Disneyland hotel venue. In short order they were given their walking papers, were out of jobs, and stranded out in the Orange County wastelands.

Soon after the dispirited band finally staggered across the San Diego County line, they decided to call it quits. Once again Johnson and Sherman regrouped around each other. Between 1980 and 1981 they performed in town as the duo, Two the Maxx. Shortly thereafter Sherman left San Diego, leaving Johnson to go solo.

Though the whereabouts and



welfare of the other Fanny, Nook, and Cranny members can't be clearly ascertained, Kent Johnson is still as creative and effervescent as ever. He put in years of solo work, collaborated as one head of a two-headed serpent with his old comrade José Sinatra, and eventually married his beautiful and talented wife, Liz Abbott. He continues to be a friend and supporter to local musicians. Finally, he remains a major asset to the local music scene as an indispensable member of the Troubadour family.



Recordially, Lou Curtiss

Roy Acuff: The Smokey Mountain Boy at 100 Years and a Blues Thing or Two

The first phonograph records that I was even consciously aware of when I was about four or five years old were by Roy Acuff and the Smokey Mountain Boys on those old lavender Okey 78s and I think one on Melotone that my Mom



picked up at Seattle's Pike Place Market. I remember tunes like "Wreck on the Highway," "Low and Lonely," "Tell Mother I'll Be There," "Be Honest With Me," and of course "The Wabash Cannonball." We also heard Roy on the national Prince Albert *Grand Ole Opry* broadcasts every Saturday night. Throughout my life his music has been an important part of my musical heritage, not always at the forefront but there nonetheless. For me, Roy nearly always symbolized what was right about country music. I can't say that I always agreed with his musical choices but more often than not he pointed the way I was going. Roy always stood for the traditional side of Nashville and I always thought he was a bit lost with the Nashville Sound and the non-country direction Nashville had taken during his last few years. On September 15, we

celebrate the 100th year of his birth, well over 60 of which were spent on the *Opry*. Hardly anyone ever speaks of him these days even though he was one of the first four elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame and always championed the *Opry* throughout his time there. I'd like to put together a celebratory concert in Roy's memory. I've talked to a few fellow Acuff fans and I'd like to hear from some others. Call me at Folk Arts Rare Records (619/282-7833) with your ideas.

I recently noted in the promo materials for the recent San Diego Blues Festival that radio station KPRI laughingly called themselves San Diego's *only* radio station that plays the blues. Well, that may have been true back around 1970. In fact, I did my first radio show on KPRI, an all blues

show about that time, and guy named Joe Chandler did a show after that for a year or two, but that was about it for blues on KPRI. They do have a blue jean commercial they air every evening for a minute or two but that's mostly white boy blues rip-offs. The only station that plays blues on a regular basis is KSDS (88.3 FM). Check out their Saturday line up that includes

• *Second Line Parade*, 8-9pm

• *Every Shade of Blue* (T's award-winning show for over 16 years), 9pm-2am

• *Beale Street Caravan*, 2-3am

• *Blues Attitude*, 3-6am

Then on Sunday, there's my own show, *Jazz Roots*, 8-10pm, and T's *Is It Late Sunday or the Monday Blues*. Also on Thursday, check out *Blues 'til Five* and on Friday, *Blues Out of the Box*. A pretty good line up from San Diego's *real* "only station that plays the blues." Check it out.

Speaking of San Diego blues, I learned that long-time San Diego bluesman Henry Ford Thompson passed away. I first met Ford when Tom "Tomcat" Courtney brought him by the old Folk Arts store for one of our early '70's concert series. Originally from Memphis, Ford was a cousin of rock legend Chuck Berry. He and Tomcat's dueling guitars, with Tom singing, brought down the house at the first San Diego Mini-Blues Festival in June of 1973. They also played together at the fifth and sixth San Diego Folk Festivals and appeared on Advent Records' San Diego Blues Jam, recorded in 1974 and reissued on CD on the

others over the next 22 or 23 years, mostly at local clubs and parties. Like most San Diego blues musicians, he never got his due. Ford was a character and stories about him, many of them unprintable here, are well known. Ford Thompson is gone, but the Ford legend continues and can only grow with time. Recordially, Lou Curtiss



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Henry Ford Thompson 1938-2003

front porch

Miss Halfway Goes All the Way

by Robert Woerheide

Anya Marina makes waves. Not the kind lapping on San Diego's shores but the kind that get her banned from The Mint [in Los Angeles] and send little old ladies running for the hills. You might call her spunky. You might call her outlandish. You might even — while listening to her unapologetic lyrics in a crowded and beer-stained bar — call her rude. Just don't call her dainty. Oh, you might think that if you caught a glimpse of her across a crowded room — a radio personality holding a cocktail, small-framed and modest. Approachable, yes . . . but controversial? Soon you can decide for yourself. In August you'll be able to get your own copy of the debut EP release of the 94.9 FM deejay and fearless singer-songwriter, Anya Marina.

The lack of inhibition is what makes Marina so surprisingly outrageous and refreshingly humorous. Her infamous song, "Millionaire," contains lyrics that would make even the most brazen schoolboy blush. Many of the songs that have turned heads in San Diego will be included on the EP, along with some new material, which is sure to be memorable. The tentative album title, *Miss Halfway*, is more than just a clever play on words — it is a personal affirmation. She explains the title is "about fighting that evil twin inside you that says horrible things; it's about coming to terms with that voice inside. It's about saying, 'I'll show you!'" That little voice better watch out.

There are two sides of Marina's talent that seem to compete for attention. Or perhaps it's a combination that makes for an altogether better act. First, her appealing voice and looks, together with her original tunes, make for an enjoyable musical show (that is, if the lyrics don't bother you). But it's her sense of humor and wit that leave you wondering why she doesn't have a gig at the Comedy Store instead. This is not to say that her music is not to be taken seriously, but rather that her honest humor adds to an already entertaining show.

Photo: Peter King



Anya Marina

As if her fiery style weren't enough on its own, Marina worked with friends and musicians to create her debut album, drawing from San Diego's talented pool of artists. She laughs, "This album has half of San Diego on it." Engineered by Peter King, the EP features Steve Poltz (with whom Marina wrote several of the songs), O (Fluf), Aaron Redfield (Dance Floor Prophets), and stand-up bassists Rob Thorsen and Jim Austin. The album was co-produced with Scott Russo of Unwritten Law, who helped with arranging tracks. Red Room Recordings, a record label associated with Redsand, which regularly features independent musicians, will release the 10-12 track EP. It will be available for purchase at independent record stores throughout the county, such as Lou's Records and Tapes in Encinitas and Off the Record on Fifth Avenue in Hillcrest.

If you can't wait for *Miss Halfway* to hit the streets — or just want to catch this fireball in action, live — you can see Marina on July 11 in the Cannibal Bar at the Catamaran Hotel in Mission Beach or at Twiggs on July 26. Her August gigs include a performance at Dizzy's on the 17th. In addition, she has a sizzling web site that her fans can visit to keep informed on everything Anya: <http://www.anyamarina.com>.



On the Road with That Mad Ahab

by Paul Hormick

Take a banjo, mandolin, and accordion; back them up with drums, bass, and guitar; mix in the influences of Bob Dylan, Hank Williams, Tom Waits, and Willie Nelson; and you get That Mad Ahab, a sextet whose sound varies from the better days of Bob Dylan and The Band to something that might be described as post-punk klezmer.

That Mad Ahab was formed about a year and a half ago. "I had a bunch of songs that I wanted some help on," says Murphy Phelan, lead singer and songwriter of the band. He started playing his songs with his cousin, Peter Deprang, who plays bass, and Matt Giebe, who sings back-up vocals and plays guitar and mandolin.

Their neighbors heard them practicing. Instead of complaining about the noise, they joined the band. Joel McCloud picked up the banjo, Mike Gustafson started playing keyboards and accordion, and Jeff Raddatz switched from guitar to drums. Since they're all neighbors, it's easy to schedule a rehearsal, which happens about every other day. They play often at the Beehive and have been recording a CD for the past two months.

Their repertoire consists almost entirely of Phelan's compositions, with an occasional cover, such as Sam Cooke's "Bring it on Home." Dynamics play an important part in their tunes. They might be rocking out as they back up Phelan's vocals, but as the jam quiets, the sounds of the banjo

and accordion come to the fore, changing the characteristics of the song from rock to something more folk or east European. Just imagine Nirvana jamming with Pete Seeger in the Borsch Belt and you get the idea.

Giebe is the most featured instrumentalist in the band, playing leads on guitar and mandolin. He picked up the mandolin only a year and a half ago, specifically for the band. Since then, "I fell in love with it," he says.

Gustafson describes his choice of keyboards and accordion as arbitrary. The important thing was playing in the band. "We just want to get up on stage and have a good time," he says. McCloud agrees. He says, "I'll be with the band as long as I can find time to do it." He adds that Phelan's songs attracted him to the band.

The drummer and bassist also say that they want to enjoy their music. Deprang describes the band as "a good release, and fun." Raddatz says, "The band's my outlet. It's the best time playing with these guys."

The band's name comes from Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. At one point the author describes the Neal Cassidy-inspired hero of the novel, Dean Moriarty, as "that mad Ahab." Of course Kerouac was making allusions to Melville, and Melville was making allusions of his own. But that's literature, and we're talking music right now.

That Mad Ahab has a good time with their music, and they want their audience to have a good time, too. Phelan sums it up. "We want to make people feel as good about us as we feel about our favorite band."



Photo: Matt Golden



TWIGGS: MORE THAN JUST A COFFEEHOUSE

by Paul Hormick

I have a friend for whom the ultimate musical experience is found at the stadium or sports arena. Being one among thousands as she stands on her seat to spy the band — so high and far away on the stage — adds to her concert thrill. I never go with her. I like my music a little quieter and to actually see the performers. That's why you'll find me at some of the smaller venues for my music, such as Twiggs' Green Room. As the room holds only about 100 people, no seat is far from the performers.

Twiggs and its Green Room were languishing until current owners Dan Stringfield and Bernie Horan bought the coffee shop six years ago. They thought about turning the Green Room into a gift and antique shop, but decided to keep it a performance space. John Ciccolella, who was a regular customer and lived in the neighborhood, volunteered to run the Green Room's sound system. "It seemed like an interesting and fun thing to do," he says. He soon took over booking the room and now runs the Wednesday open mic as well. Six years after the fact, he is a bit surprised that he fully manages the entertainment in the Green Room. "I didn't think that I'd be working in the capacity I am now," he says.

Since the room is separate from the coffee house, musicians don't have to fight the noise from the espresso machine, and they don't have to play over the voices of the patrons who come to Twiggs not for music, but to converse.

Ciccolella says that many of the musicians appreciate the PA, too. "The sound is really good. We made a sizable investment in some good gear," he says.

Some of San Diego's best musicians have played at Twiggs. Fred Benedetti and George Svoboda have performed classical guitar duo there, and so has Chris Klich with his jazz combo. Singer songwriters Deborah Liv Johnson and Gregory Page have sung to their fans in the Green Room. Local singer songwriter Will Edwards chose Twiggs to celebrate his CD release. He says, "Twiggs has the reputation as being supportive of local musicians."

In addition to these

local talents, internationally known finger-style guitarist Muriel Anderson and Laurence Juber (known for being Paul McCartney's guitarist as well as for doing a stint on the soap opera *The Young and the Restless*) have played there as well. "They sought us out," Ciccolella says of Anderson and Juber. He explains that although these musicians are internationally known, the number of fans they have in San Diego are few; therefore a smaller venue like the Green Room works well for them.

As part of Stringfield's and Horan's commitment to the community, the Green Room is available for local business networking meetings, 12-step program meetings, and act-



ing and piano workshops during the day. Stringfield handles the booking for these events. "Dan is a very neighborhood conscious guy," says Ciccolella. "He wants a community place for people to gather."

His work at the Green Room over the last six years has been rewarding for Ciccolella. "I love being around so many interesting and talented people," he says. "I've watched people grow. I've seen some people become very credible formidable artists."

Twiggs is located at 4590 Park Boulevard in the University Heights section of San Diego. They also have a location in the newly refurbished El Cortez Hotel building. For information and performance schedules, call (619) 296-0616 or visit their website: <http://twiggs.org>.



WILL PLAY FOR MONEY

by Ellen Duplessie

Showing his creative abilities once again, Steve Denyes has just completed his first book, *Gigging for a Living*. After 15 years of performing in coffeehouses, bars, restaurants, concert halls, clubs, and theaters, Denyes decided it was time to write a book about the experience of being a working musician.

What a great idea! We've all seen so many "how to" books about

the music business, but I, for one, have not yet seen one written on the realities of earning your way as a musician.

"There are literally hundreds of books on how to write songs, get gigs, and sell CDs, but none of them expresses what it's really like to make music for a living," explains Denyes. "There is a lot of joy in making music but there's also a lot of struggle. I wanted this book to reflect the good and the bad."

Denyes intentionally chose musicians who are making a living playing music without the assistance of a major record label. "These are musicians who are out there in the trenches, playing gigs and making records on shoestring budgets," says Denyes. "Their passion, dedication, and perseverance is truly an inspiration to me. I hope their stories will inspire others to follow their passion and do what they love."

Gigging for a Living includes extensive interviews with 15 musicians Denyes has come to know over the course of his career, including Steve White, Gregory Page, Eve

Selis, Peter Sprague, Shawn P. Rohlf, Deborah Liv Johnson, Scottie Blinn, and Jeff Berkley, among several others who have since moved out of the area. Denyes gets to the heart of what it's really like to make music for a living by asking them tough questions about the effect their careers have had on their lives, their relationships, and even their bank accounts.

What makes it especially interesting reading for the local community is the fact that the folks he's interviewed are all local artists. It's a most interesting insight into the lives of many whom we already know and whose music we enjoy. We get a better idea about the sacrifices these artists make in order to follow their musical passions, along with the many rewards of doing so.

Although I've only had a chance to skim through the book, it is one that I don't want to put down. It's easy reading and quite fascinating. Watch for a complete book review in the August issue of the *S.D. Troubadour*.

Photo: Nancy Krueger



Steve Denyes

Gigging for a Living: Candid Conversations with Independent Working Musicians, and Denyes (along with many others) will celebrate its release on Sunday, July 20, 7 p.m. at the 101 Artists' Colony in Encinitas (25 East E St., 760/632-9074). His book is dedicated to Indian Joe Stewart, who currently lives in Ramona and plays all over the county with his band, Indian Joe and the Chiefs.

Denyes celebrates the book's release on Sunday, July 20, 7 p.m. at the 101 Artist's Colony in Encinitas (25 East E Street).





parlor showcase

by Bill Richardson

The Man

Like the late Steve Allen, he's able to make a brand new, very good song up on the spot. Like Sammy Davis Jr., music may be the most essential component of the oxygen he breathes. Like Lenny Bruce, he'll find a way to isolate a bit of tenderness in a crunchy stew of tragedy and outrage.

Unlike those other geniuses, Steve Poltz is still alive among us, a fact that makes us a very lucky bunch indeed.

And on September 9th, we can add another coat of luster to our lives with the release of Mr. Poltz's second studio album as a solo artist, *Chinese Vacation*.

For allowing the *San Diego Troubadour* first-crack-in-print-in-the-entire-world with regard to his fresh new baby, we are very grateful to Steven for his kindness, courage, and/or dementia. This may not be a pretty story. But it'll do its *damnedest* to be a beautiful one.

His audience (especially his female fans) would disagree, but from well before his high school years and up to the present day, Poltz has (honestly!) seen himself as somewhat of a geek. Perhaps his reliance on his sister (older by two years) as mentor and role model can explain his ongoing, natural rapport with members of the fairer sex (and, perhaps, his penchant for occasionally wearing dresses on stage). That he was blessed with dreamboat looks hasn't been too much of a liability either. *S.D. Troubadour* columnist José Sinatra, watching from the wings at several of his concerts in order to finger the female pulse throbbing in the front rows, logged in with an adept summary in these pages nearly two years ago. Their loving acceptance of his musical performance, he explained, seemed bruised by a common urge: their need for his seed.

Well, ladies, there's always hope. In the meantime, everyone can play (and play with) his fruitfully multiplying, immaculate conceptions.

Poltz, a classically trained guitarist, got his first taste of show biz in the Up With People band, which travelled the globe, leading to his first taste of ho' fizz, set up for his young sake by his "host family" (two wild and crazy guys in the Martin/ Aykroyd vein) in

Buenos Aires. A new world opened its petals for Steve; he was thankful to see it blooming vibrantly in San Diego when he followed his sister to live here in 1979.

Then came college, along with a stint playing classical guitar at the El Amigo Ballroom in El Cajon and at Por Favor in La Mesa where, over time, he would work the odd original composition, with vocals, into the diners' background score. Various other jobs would help keep him in strings and textbooks, one of which carried the prescient title of "nipple fitter" with a PVC pipe company. He graduated from USD with a degree in political science (having minored in Spanish studies and business administration), but his true vocation had already established claim to his heart: he and one of life's fortunate miracles called Robert Driscoll had fused into a truly hot combo that they would eventually name the Rugburns.

A handful of significant markers have directed the path of Poltz's journey, and he speaks of them with awe and humility. His first meeting with Driscoll, of course, is among them. Others involve the unexpected interest and kindness of several figures of the near-mythic San Diego music scene of over two decades ago — people Poltz had grown to idolize. Buddy Blue (still going, glowing, still better than ever!) might have kick-started the Rugburns with a rave review in the evening edition of the *S.D. Union-Tribune*, a thrill that Poltz can still quote from memory, even as his eyes fog in embarrassed pride.

Still led by Poltz, the Rugburns continue to thrive today. Past and current members continue to intermingle on the stages of various venues (particularly the Casbah) throughout the year. Stunning Stinky on sticks is a show in himself, of course, aided in the beat by bassist John Castro, who is often enhanced by the cake icings of the co-visionary Driscoll and the redoubtable psychotic sensitivity of *troubadour par excellence* Gregory Page.

There was Dan McLain (a.k.a Country Dick Montana) who, after one particular (SRO) marathon at Kelly's Pub in Old Town offered a bit of advice to Steven regarding a certain physical act of showmanship — advice Poltz immediately put into action and

Steve

how often is DYSFUNCTION treated with such HAUNTING CHARM?

has successfully followed to this day. (That particular tip must be kept secret for now, since another local musical figure got wind of it and has assured me that those I love might not enjoy pleasant lives were I to put it in print before he tries it out himself.)

There was the young girl who served him tea at the original Java Joe's in Poway, a burgeoning artist who would eventually be known as simply Jewel. Steve took her into his heart and home; they gave birth to a number one hit, they toured, recorded, globe-hopped. If there had ever been any doubt, that doubt had died. Steve Poltz was now officially a pro.

His first solo album, *One Left Shoe*, received great reviews nationwide (including *Rolling Stone*) and led to a fabulous half-hour special on VH1.

The follow-up began its unique recording history on September 13, 2001, two days after the vicious assault on humanity begun in New York and still reverberating internationally today. It was also a year in which Poltz had lost two of his dearest friends.

It was after completing *Chinese Vacation* that Poltz became aware of something not quite right in the work. His usual passion seemed to sound subdued. Too much melancholy had seeped into too many aspects of the production. At the cost of a tremendous amount of money and nerves, Steve scrapped the entire project, hoping to resurrect it at some more agreeable, more pleasant future time.

His travels took him to Austin, where he encountered a welcome, two-sided road sign that read Bob Schneider and Billy Harvey.

This was to be another of his life's landmarks. In the home studio of Harvey, *Chinese Vacation* was reborn. Several songs were changed in the running order, and an elative symbiosis of art and production was at last achieved.

Chinese Vacation is now, finally, exactly how Steve Poltz had always wanted it to be. It'll be on his own label, 98 Pounder Records, and will be distributed by Sony Red throughout the world.

The Music

Several cinematic classics (beginning with the 1935 *A Tale of Two Cities*) have had one English-speaking character or another wishing some hated enemy off to imagined purga-

tory in China. Vacation? That would be a kind way of putting it.

And quite kindly it is put here in the invisible grooves of Steve Poltz's *Chinese Vacation*. Imposed exile is the only feasible remedy to the two main problems our hero is facing: his lady and himself.

I found myself listening to it as a single narrative, and when I told Steve about this face to face, his eyes widened momentarily and he smiled. No objection at all.

The songs can each stand alone as separate entities, and proudly. But their order

seemed to me to be deliberate, while I settled back to enjoy a soap opera of majestic dimensions.

The album kicks off with "Friendly Fire," a song with a killer smile hiding something dire and repressed. As pure pop, it is of the highest order — at least as good as most of the classics of the late '60s, even as the lyrics hint at an intriguing, mysterious

discord. What a way to begin the psychodrama about to unfold! As it was with "Walk Away Rene" or (Dusty Springfield's) "I Only Want to Be With You," I didn't want "Friendly Fire" to end. Yep, it's a monster; you read it here first.

"California" picks up later, our hero having ended up in a sanitarium. Whatever his maladies, they don't seem to have been caused by himself alone . . .

"You Remind Me Who I Am" finds him back with Her, reacquainting himself with some kind of normalcy, finding undeniable comfort in her presence. A lovely melody with an edgy poignancy. (Steve co-wrote this with the lovely Anya Marina.)

"Chinese Vacation" reveals that not only is she entirely crazy, but so is her whole family. The only way out *is* out. The door. So long! It is oh, so sweet.

In "Staxx," he begins to break down and start to miss her. Witty lyrics reveal some of



parlor showcase



Poltz

her crimes and abuses . . . and the unexplainable power behind the tug of love.

The ping pong of splitting and reuniting again and again is aptly envisioned in "10 Chances," in "Lost Without You," and in "Waterfalls" (the latter being the only non-original here but thematically fitting and certainly one of Poltz's most popular concert favorites). Our hero finds himself alone again and on a downward spiral.

For a song about hopeless love, infatuation, and overpowering lust, look no further than "Spiderboy." Here the evils of alcohol are revealed, the cops are called, and things begin to get hairy in a very bouncy, perversely sexy way.

"Music Box" sounds as sweet as its namesake, with a brooding sadness that may seem incongruous but fits like a custom dental dam. "I Killed Walter Matthau" finds the wasted couple pathetically together where they are able to share in one of the strongest narratives Poltz has yet written. It is here that our hero is actually named (surprise!) and yes, he does kill Walter Matthau. But he doesn't. Dive into this one and you'll understand it all through your own sad, sort-of happy smile. This deceptively pedestrian poem contains a line involving the verb "squeeze" that has an annoying ability to make me cry every time I think about it. Like now. Really.

"Give You Up for Lent" concludes the sordid, immensely moving story of drunken despair with yet another one-way ticket to China . . . or even Acapulco. . .

Anywhere but here, where the listener is safe with memories of a truly splendid experience. You'll be humming the tunes for years, happy to have found so much love within so much chaos. How often is dysfunction treated with such haunting charm?

Steve Poltz graduates now to his next grade with honors. Heck, I'd give him a full scholarship for the future studies of his choice, so long as he promises to continue filing musical reports from the field back to the public on a timely basis. While a gracious God further blesses his geek heart, we perhaps should start getting in line. Now.



Photos: Bill Richardson, Troy Lee Wells, Millie Moreno



ramblin'

Bluegrass Corner

by D. Dwight Worden

Next month is a big month for bluegrass in San Diego with the opening of San Diego's first real bluegrass festival. Be sure to visit **Summergrass San Diego Pickin' in Paradise Festival** at the Antique Gas and Steam Engine Park in Vista anytime from Friday afternoon August 22 through Sunday August 24. There is a great line up of top bands, food aplenty, vendors, kids' activities, on-site camping, plus all the interesting aspects of the Gas and Steam Engine Museum to explore. Get your tickets, reserve camping, check out the festival schedule at www.summergrass.net, and get to the know the Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum at www.agsem.com.

One exciting aspect of the **Pickin' in Paradise** for all musicians is the great line up of free workshops offered at the Festival. Let's take a look at what's offered. For beginning to intermediate guitar players there is a workshop by one of Southern California's top performing flatpickers and instructors, **Mike Nadolson** of **Tricopolis Records** and **Silverado** fame. All you need do is show up with your guitar at 6:15 pm on Friday August 22 – your festival ticket is your entry to this and all other workshops. Banjo players won't want to miss the Saturday, August 23, workshop at 10:30 am with **Dennis Caplinger** of **Bluegrass Etc.**, who is among the top banjo elite in the nation and one nice person and great teacher. **John Hickman** of **California** will co-teach. And, near to my own heart (you can bet I will be there!) is a fiddle workshop on Saturday, August 23, conducted by **Byron Berline**, **Dennis Caplinger**, and **Mike Tatar Jr.** One of the foremost national players for

several decades, Byron Berline is a living legend who has played with everyone from Bill Monroe to the Byrds. Dennis Caplinger plays fiddle at the same top level he plays the banjo, while young Mike Tatar Jr. of **Within Tradition** compliments the teaching team.

Want to improve your singing? Visit the harmony singing workshop, conducted by **Ron Spears** of **Ron Spears and Within Tradition** at 2:30 pm on Saturday the 23. Ron has one of the best voices in bluegrass and honed his skills singing with Rhonda Vincent and the Rage, among others. Have the itch to write songs? Learn from one of the best at the 4:30 pm song writing workshop led by **Steve Spurgeon** of **Bluegrass Etc.**

If you are a newcomer to bluegrass but anxious to play and learn, don't miss the Get Acquainted Jam, hosted by **Les** and **Lou Ann Preston** with the able assistance of **Ken Tagame** on bass. The jam is scheduled on Saturday at 5:30 pm and again on Sunday at 11:30 am. Bring your instruments and join in the fun!

Sunday, August 24, offers up a bass workshop taught by **Bill Bryson** of **Bluegrass Etc.** and **Josh Ash** of **Within Tradition** at 12:30 pm. For the more ambitious guitar players, although all are welcome, **John Moore** of **Bluegrass Etc.**, **Raul Reynoso** of **New West**, and **Dan Crary** of **California** will put on one great guitar workshop at 2:30 pm, followed by a mandolin workshop led by **John Moore** at 3:30 pm.

Want to be impressed by the teachers? Here's a little about just a few of the workshop leaders. **Dan Crary** is recognized as one of the founders of the dynamic flat-picking guitar technique. He has recorded with Doc Watson, Tony Rice, Byron Berline, and countless others and



has toured world-wide. His 6 and twelve-string guitar artistry transcends the boundaries of style and genre as he ventures widely into celtic, blues, jazz, bluegrass, classical, and folk styles.

Dennis Caplinger, multi-instrumentalist and vocalist, is one of the most sought-after studio musicians in California and often travels to Nashville to do sessions. He is currently under contract with Network Productions of San Diego, recording numerous television and radio commercials as well as writing and recording music for their extensive music library, one of the largest in the world. His movie soundtrack credits include *Back to the Future III*, *El Diablo*, *Rio Diablo* and Steven King's *Apt Pupil* among others.

Bill Bryson, legendary bass player of the L.A. Country/ bluegrass music scene, has been held in high esteem for the last 30 years. He was a founding member of the Desert Rose Band and the Laurel Canyon Ramblers. He has also toured extensively with Dan Fogelberg, Chris Hillman (of the Byrds), Bernie Leadon (of the Eagles) and the Bluegrass Cardinals. Bill has recorded with Merle Haggard, Buck Owens, Glen Campbell, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Emmy Lou Harris, and the Oak Ridge Boys to name a few. He has won two Grammys and has been nominated numerous times for the Academy of Country Music's Bass Player of the Year Award. His credits also include feature films such as *The Long Riders*, *Cannery Row*, and *Bound for Glory* as well as numerous television and radio commercials.

John Hickman, legendary banjo master of **Berlin, Crary, and Hickman**, among others, will be part of the teaching team for the banjo workshop. If you want to see smooth, watch John's amazing hands glide across the strings and the neck of his five-string. It's nothing short of spellbinding!

John Moore may be the fastest and cleanest mandolin picker out there today, except perhaps for his student Chris Thiele of Nickel Creek. In addition to being the mandolinist, guitarist, and vocalist of **Bluegrass Etc.**, John is also the mandolinist with the internationally acclaimed band **California**, the International Bluegrass Music Association's 1992, 1993, and 1994 Instrumental Band of the Year, and the **Pickin' in Paradise** headliner.

These teachers are hot, hot, hot! And you get an hour with each of them for free as part of your festival admission. Hope to see you there!

RADIO DAZE

by Jim McInnes

GERMANY AND THE ROCK OPERA

During the mid-to-late 1990s, my stepson, Dustin, a.k.a. Dirty, toured the world with San Diego's Rocket from the Crypt. In 1996 Rocket had a British hit "On a Rope," which is where this tale begins.

I had heard from friends in London that they'd seen the band on the TV shows *White Room* and *Top of the Pops*, but nobody could tell what sort of chart position "On a Rope" had attained. I entered the song's title into a web search engine and got scores of responses. I clicked on a random reference, which took me to the online version of an English pop music publication, the name of which escapes me. Before logging off from this website, I noticed a message crawling across the bottom of the screen: Send us your best hand and win! Upon closer inspection I read that the website would, for the next week, deal me an electronic poker playing card every time I logged on. The idea was to assemble my best five-card hand and email it to the U.K. by the deadline. If I had a good hand, I could win something. For the next seven days I religiously logged on, got my e-card, and signed off, never actually reading anything but the card. When I put my best hand together, I had a queen-high straight flush, which kicks ass in the 3-D world and should do the same in the e-world ... although, as one who'd never won a thing except a wood-burning kit in Boy Scouts and \$58 in a 1990 lottery drawing, I held no expectations.

On December 26, 1996, my email told me I WAS ONE OF FIVE WORLD-WIDE WINNERS!!!! I had won a trip for two to Germany!!!! All we had to do was attend the premiere, in Cologne, of a new musical! Since my wife was predisposed at the time, I gave my brother, Rick, a call. To no one's surprise, he jumped at the opportunity to spend a Boy's Week Out 6,000 miles away from r-e-s-p-o-n-s-i-b-i-l-i-t-y.

I was skeptical for about five weeks until, in early February, all the necessary documents arrived. We were jetting off to Germany to attend the world premiere of *Gaudi*, a rock opera based upon the life and times of the Spanish art nouveau architect. We couldn't wait! A musical about an architect, composed by Eric Woolfson, the



Jim McInnes

former Alan Parsons collaborator.

On the evening of the premiere, Rick and I were late, so we had to be ushered to our seats during a break in the "action." Fifteen minutes later, as a masked architect entered from stage right, singing in German, Rick leaned over and whispered, "Let's go to Amsterdam!" The theater was only a block from the Eurail station. The sun was still shining. We were four blocks from the hotel and we had almost no luggage. (We're guys, remember?) Forty-five minutes after entering the theater, we were on a train headed for Holland ... but I can't remember ... what was I talking about?

I chatted with Alan Parsons about 16 months ago; I mentioned the ridiculous musical written by his former collaborator and how my brother and I escaped to the Netherlands. He chuckled and changed the subject. Five minutes ago I looked on the web and saw that the soundtrack to *Gaudi* is now marketed as an album by the Alan Parsons Project.

I am currently writing the music and lyrics for a new musical comedy, *Armando, the Guy Who Fixed the Leak in Our Spa*.

You might hear Alan Parsons (or Eric Woolfson) on my swell new eclectic rock show, *The Vinyl Resting Place*, from 6 to 8 pm every Sunday, on The Planet (103.7 FM).




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Hosing Down

by José Sinatra

At least he seemed to float. We children planned our futures when we watched him riding by. So cool, amid the noise and chrome. (So bold we would be on bicycles!)



The inimitable Mr. Sinatra

The king-of-all-modern-words appears but once in the late Georges Alvina's seminal *Floating Stone* of 1976. Had he known the vicious power that single word would wield in today's America, he probably would have assumed all blame for its unfortunate revitalization and likely would have cut off his own head years before his actual, remarkable suicide.

There is little doubt that Alvina was a genius. (That his daughter Elaina, in her biography of her father, seems to focus only on his misogyny, questionable politics, and compromised hygiene, needn't concern us at this moment.) The man understood completely the power of the word well before the word became God. And the word was *so* (not

Cool.

Yes, America, meet your new Master.

We seek it, proclaim it, form bonds with it. Today it has become the most frequently used adjective in any random celebrity interview. It permeates movie poster quotes. Madison Avenue wields it as its most powerful sword. It is the only word that, when even casually spoken, seems to somehow automatically bestow its own meaning upon the speaker.

Cool.

Personally, I've had enough. I will become Judas to this new messiah — not for 30 pieces of silver — simply for a bit of print. Even if it is impervious. Even if you can't make it produce a single decent anagram. You won't have a cloo. You'll drive yourself loco.

It is destroying our soul. We're even unable to pronounce it in its proper single syllable, giving it two; the degree of nonchalance with which we speak it determines the level of our own success in our quest to embody its essence.

If I hear it or read it even one more time than the 423 I do each day, I may have to become a politician. It is hastening the zombification of our nation.

We must find a better term. Change "cool" to "hose."

Hose whip. L.L. Hose J. Hosio. Hose down. Hey! That's really . . . neat. How totally *hose*.

Any idiot should be able to see the aesthetic benefits. What rhymes with "cool"? School. Stool. Jewe --- oops. Cruel. And "Hose": Glows. Rose.

Let there be light! Georges Alvina certainly foresaw the ultimate effect:

One day he floated, stoned. His body shattered glass store doors like rocks we'd throw. Crystal crowbars opened up his eyes, that face, and chiseled out a jagged smile. We saw those secrets living, flowing, drying up, while tailor-suited businessmen tallied up the damages, inviting us to realize our own.

That is *so* hose! It's time to learn some new words — any words — and substitute them for the "C" word, if only to prevent us from vegetating into vapor.

O, my brethren. Lettuce spray. I'll hang around and wait. Unlike Judas Iscariot, I'll keep my noose loose.



Needs vs. Wants

by Paul Abbott

Right now — as I write this — I'm referencing a recently mastered project with my headphones on. And my thought is, "...I really want to get that new pair of Grado headphones." And, as innocuous as that thought sounds, it spurred the article you're reading.

It seems like each month I have a mental list of new equipment to purchase. To that end, I've created two ways of looking at this ongoing situation: *equipment I need* and *equipment I want*. If you ask my fiancée, all of it falls into the latter category. But, to be fair, some things are purely desire while others are actual necessity. To keep myself out of relationship and credit trouble, I've devised a system for purchasing new gear. In addition to helping me sleep better at night, it's also very useful in making sure my mastering studio stays on the straight and narrow.

The system goes like this: I never buy more than one piece of new equipment at a time. I know, you were expecting something much more epiphanous. But the simplicity defines its effectiveness.

When I purchase something new — be it an equalizer, subwoofer, or speaker cable — I rely on all my other gear, which is properly calibrated to my listening environment, to help me test and integrate a new item. This is the only way for me to determine how effective a new piece of gear is. If I trust my speakers, cabling, and listening environment — all of which have been tested and calibrated with specific tones and measurement equipment to verify accurate frequency and spatial results — I can rest assured that my new equalizer is working the way I believe it to be. However, if I get a new equalizer and new speakers, how can I tell where a response is originating? Could it be that my new speakers are empha-



Paul Abbott

sizing high frequencies, or is it that my new equalizer has a steeper curve than I'm used to using? By limiting myself to one piece of equipment at a time, I'm working with a known equation and can calibrate it to work with my system. And if something seems amiss, I can easily isolate the problem.

I encourage readers with recording equipment to adopt this philosophy. You'll notice more consistent, effective results in your work and realize that your equipment is much more accurate and effective when it's used properly. If you think this takes some of the fun out of purchasing new gear, you're probably right. But for whatever is lost in the instant gratification of an impulsive equipment-buying spree, an equal if not greater amount of gratification is gained in using your equipment more effectively and accurately.

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of note



Peter Hall Uncluttered

by Frederick Leonard

Personality goes a long way. Sometimes the charm of one's soul shines through in a way that exceeds all technical issues, politics, and personal preferences.

All I have to say about this 13-song collection, in terms of its technical value, is that it's homemade. Its clean, bare bones, and free of any slick sonic ointments. Not one studio trick. And this, my dear friends, is exactly what makes Peter Hall's CD so charmingly warm and human. While much of the world is stressing on the newest, slickest, biggest, baddest, bestest next thing ever, this sounds like he sat down one day with a beer, hit the record button, and started spilling his guts as a guy.

Meet Peter Hall. He's right here in person, in 3D – a person embedded in and giving life to an otherwise lifeless piece of mass-produced digitally capable plastic. Tough trick, artistically speaking. He tells stories and spins a heart-felt logic in a unique baritone croon that is quite special indeed. It was the first thing that struck me as soon as I popped in the disc. All the while, Hall does his lyrical business with a sense of humor and seems to have a knack for the sly delivery of irony. This is one of those recordings that gets me chuckling in new places with each spin. He is obviously intelligent and soulful as a writer. Shit matters to this guy and he has the insight to share his context.

The sound has a retro feel, but I must also say that it shines a contemporary attitude. Kinda sounds like driving your very first beater through the Blue Ridge Mountains on your way to the Haight with "Wild Horses" on the radio. Musically there is something unique about the arrangements. Instead of trying to "audition" to the world about how great his chops are (he's got 'em), he's decided to simply complement the spirit of each song with sparse and very appropriate renderings. The result is impressive by way of subtleties (the truest sign of intelligence and insight) and the image lies somewhere between his basic roots instinct and the surreal irony by which Hall takes note in the very real world.



Darlin' and Rose Tomorrow, Yesterday

by Frederick Leonard

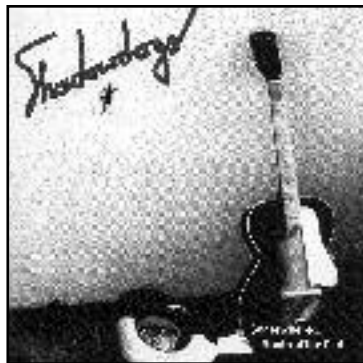
Listening to this CD is like diggin' into a barbecued rib the size of the one that flipped over Fred Flintstone's car. Corn on the cob. A cold brew. Shucks, folks, this record is absolutely wonderful – another case of locating the heart and knowing how to immortalize it in plastic form.

Nisha Catron and Sylvester Bowen both play guitars, do the two-step, and sing to each other all over this gem. This is a happy, fun record. "Don't Make a Cowboy Cry in Texas" is enough to make me grab this guy another rib (and a beer!) when he's between verses, just to keep him from taking a dinner break and continue playing. And I'm certain he routinely wipes the sauce off his "strangs." Nisha is captured in a very sweet moment while dreaming of the horse she wishes to ride someday on "Buttercup." The best part of this song is that I can't really ever recall this theme in a lyric before. I like it when that happens.

"Every Little Thing" is every big thing a HIT should be. The song's hook sticks to me much like the cactus spur in Sly's aforementioned "Texas" ditty. This is the noble promise of an evolved man who knows a good thing when he's lucky enough to be kissin' her. Damn right. As far as songs-to-your-sweetie go, this might be one to beat. I want to hear this on the radio.

This collection is extremely well produced, with just the right amount of musical surprises to keep you lickin' that sauce off yer fingers. The traditional "Crawdad Song" even features a hilarious jews harp rendered by none other than Buddy Blue.

"Heartsick, Lonesome and Blue" is straight outta Lafayette, à la Marcia Ball, wailing away with a belly full of shrimp etouffee and sweaty Dixies in the late afternoon Bayou sun. C'mon, grab your sweetie and hit the dance floor, because by the time you get to this track you'll need to work off some of those ribs you been hoggin', buster. And, hey, save some for the little kids, will ya?



Shadowdogs Somewhere ... South of the Clef

by Phil Harmonic

Shadowdogs is a very talented country-rock group with a sound spawned in Southern California by such bands as Poco, Buffalo Springfield, the Byrds, Eagles, and Flying Burrito Brothers. Their new CD, *Somewhere ... South of the Clef* is right out of the mold shaped by Gram Parsons, Chris Hillman, et al. The group, headed by Bruce Fitzsimmons, is made up of well-seasoned musicians, including such notable guests as Dennis Caplinger and the late Jerry Glassel.

Fitzsimmons wrote nine of the songs and Rich Maiorano wrote the remaining five. Besides handling all the lead vocals, Fitzsimmons also mixed and produced the CD. His voice is pleasant and quite suited to this style. Bassist Joe Scarantino is listed as the only background vocalist and, if this is so, adds excellent well-balanced, full-textured high harmonies that remind me of Timothy B. Schmidt and Randy Meisner, two accomplished bass-playing vocalists who both played in Poco and the Eagles. The lush sound is extended and embellished by Rick Schmidt's pedal steel guitar and Dennis Caplinger's fiddle, mandolin, and banjo. Normally I don't like to see musicians produce and mix their own work, because they have a tendency to overproduce and polish. However Fitzsimmons, also a multi-instrumentalist, delivers a fine effort, with a wonderful substance that shows through. There is a lot of good listening here, and it is good listening music when you're just hangin' around the house. It has a pick-me-up flavor that's uplifting. There are also slower songs and songs that create a more melancholy feel, but all in all, this is *feel good* music, which will find you bouncing in your chair.



Will Edwards Lookout Road

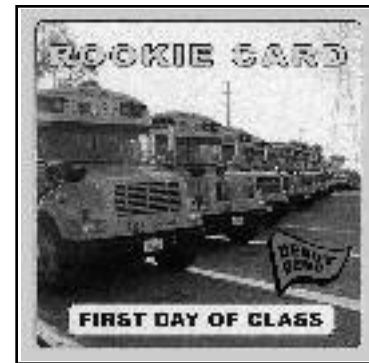
by Phil Harmonic

When I started listening to "City Walls," the first track from Will Edwards' new CD, *Lookout Road*, I was transported back to the folk revival period of the early '60s. This song features good lyrics and vocals that emulate a proper feel from Edwards and backing vocalist Saba. Highly effective instrumentation from Johnny Ciccolella (Twiggs' music man) on fretless bass, Will Turner on violin, and Nico Gutierrez on percussion create a mood with a less-is-more concept. To further explain what I mean, I would describe the instrumentation as a subtle complexity of nuance that arises out of its simplicity. Is that too cryptic?

On "Treasure Maps" I hear shades of Chris Isaak, whose songwriting can convey a mood with the best of 'em. Like many before him, Edwards is a storyteller that you can't pigeon-hole into one genre. His words cross the boundaries of folk, rock, and country and find their way into their own realm.

My favorite song is "Wit's End." When you hear the lyrics, you know this singer not only means what he is saying but you also feel the conviction of his words.

Many of the songs on this CD are similar in tempo (moderately slow) and, as good as they are, the play list could use a pick-me-up song to provide a contrast for the listener's ear. I also say this about my favorite local songwriter, Gregory Page, when he performs solo. The old musician's adage used to be: You don't play two slow songs back to back unless you're a dance band and it's the end of the evening. I still like listening to these songs though, because they reach inside and touch you, and that is all that is required of any songwriter.



Rookie Card First Day of Class

by Phil Harmonic

Rookie Card. What a clever name for a band. If you listen to them long enough, you might call them great songs. They're catchy, melodic, and have a feel that will grow on you if you let it. They seemingly have many influences and my guess would be Elvis Costello, the Beatles, Steve Poltz, and any late '60's group with good vocals and harmonies built around good guitar licks and chord progressions. I know that this is a demo debut, but I still wish certain information – such as who sings what and who wrote what, etc. – would have been included with the liner notes. Lyrics would also be nice. Despite my idiosyncrasies, I still like this CD very much. There is a lot of talent behind the sound. Songs that impressed me the most are "Green Glo," "2/29," "Dear John," "TEH Typos," and "Put Your Honey Where My Mouth Is," which is a country song amid the rock 'n' roll. Band members – or The Rookies – include Jason Hee, Adam Gimbel, Nasrallah Helena, and Gabe Acock. I really want to see this band live and I'd also like to tell them that I thought their laminated Rookie Card marketing scheme was a brilliant idea.

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RANTHOUSE

THE LOCAL MUSIC SCENE (WELL, MOSTLY)

by Gus T. Williker

FOOL FER JEWEL

I know the **Jewel** bashin' bandwagon is overweight, but I'm sure that ox cart can handle one more pile on. Have y'all seen her new pictorial in *Blender* magazine? Oh sure, I pleased myself to it a half dozen times before my cynical mind intervened, but I also eat a whole pint of **Ben & Jerry's Everything but the... ice cream** in one sittin', and that don't make it right!

Jewel, whose wardrobe once recalled **Janis Joplin**, now looks more like **Dita von Teese**. A black corset presses her boobs into a chin rest, and her underwear straps peek out of her **Britney**-inspired hip huggers. Sex sells, and I'm sorry, but Jewel sold off the farm fer luxury condos. I know exactly what you **Everyday Angels** (Jewel's international fan club, which should really change its name to Everyday Dark Angels, considering their leader now looks like a

dominatrix) are gonna say:

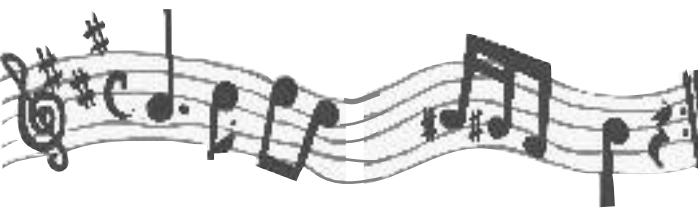
*Pretty girl, pretty girl,
do you hate her
'cause she's pieces of you?*

You'll *quote* Jewel, cuz you don't think for yourself. Now...I don't *hate* her, but in my mind, Jewel has broken the unspoken Bohemian Busker Contract. If you build yer career on flower dresses and livin' out of a van, it just don't seem right to reside in Rancho Santa Fe with diamonds. "Who Will Save Your Soul" just gits more and more ironic...don't it?

RANDUM RANT

Real white trash have an excuse. If Cletus shoots his neighbor's **Mexican Hairless**, cuz he thought a "burnt dawg" should be put out of its misery, we can sympathize, because he's poor and uneducated. But, there's no excuse for **yippie trash**.

My girlfriend and I had the extreme displeasure of "dining" next to some of *them* at our favorite pizza joint a few weeks back. What's yippie trash?! Well,



they are hippies with professional jobs and NO STINKIN' MANNERS!

It looked innocent enough — moms, dads, and the kiddie baseball team stopping off for some pizza after the game. But picture this scenario...

- one boy repeatedly bouncin' a Superball off the glass door next to our table (almost hitting my girlfriend in the head)
- two brats using a miniature soccer ball to play set-and-spike volleyball in the middle of the restaurant
- six drunk parents yellin' conversation at the top of their lungs
- 12 or so kids runnin' around screamin' like blue-faced Mel Gibsons charging a battlefield

No, I'm not a parent. But I know what it takes to discipline a child, because my parents handled me. I *would* be that kid using the double doors as a bouncy-ball backstop, but my mom *would've* put a stop to it real quick. But the yippie trash think *their* parents were too

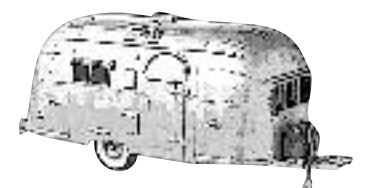
restrictive — "a real bummer man" — and the children should be free to be kids. Well, that's all well and good if you plan to live like the **Grizzly Adams family**, but in a society there are rules. You trade some freedom for the opportunity to eat at restaurants, get medicine for your brats, and use technology like the cell phone attached to your hip. Grow the "F" up!

XOXO,
Gus T. Williker
www.WhiteHotTrash.com



Photo courtesy of Heidi Calvert (www.bluggrproductions.com)

Our man fer all seasons, Gus Williker



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Velveteen Rabbit at Dizzy's



Anya Marina and José Sinatra at the Casbah

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Daybreak at Twiggs

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Annie Bethancourt

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Danielle LoPresti at Dizzy's



Photo: Millie Moreno

Anyz Marina and Steve Poltz at the Casbah

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Brave Combo at the Fern Street Circus

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